

**FROM OSTPOLITIK TO
REUNIFICATION:
WEST GERMAN-SOVIET
POLITICAL RELATIONS
SINCE 1974**

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Introduction

This study is an examination of FRG-USSR political relations between 1974 and 1982. The study concentrates on the West German side of FRG-USSR relations in the 'follow-on' period to the innovative 'treaty' period of Ostpolitik. It was a period when the overall climate of détente began to deteriorate, culminating in the Afghanistan crisis.

The study is chiefly grounded on the West German side of FRG-USSR relations, though chapter 7 is a partial exception where events after 1982 are dealt with and where the focus inevitably shifts to the USSR.

Three main types of sources are used in the study: interviews with West German government and party officials; West German official public documents; and West German, British, United States, and French literature and press sources. No interviews of Soviet officials were conducted, nor were original Soviet sources used. However, where the Soviet side is brought in, the author has striven to produce as accurate a picture as possible using Western sources (particularly those having access to Eastern sources not open to the author)¹ and interviews with West German government and party officials.

With regard to the reliability of public statements made by the Chancellor during this period, Schmidt is one of those politicians who seem to put 'a lot of themselves' into their speeches and his speeches are generally acknowledged to be very valuable and informative. Certainly Chancellor Schmidt is very much associated with the terms *Berechenbarkeit*, *Glaubwürdigkeit*, *Stetigkeit*, and *Vorhersehbarkeit* ('calculability', 'credibility', 'constancy', and 'predictability'). Furthermore, even if Schmidt – as he surely did – spoke in public with an eye to creating a certain effect, there is a limit to how far any political figure required to operate in private and in public can keep to two entirely different 'sets of books', i.e. the private 'real' ideas and opinions of the politician, if he has any – as Schmidt certainly had – keep on breaking

through his public discourses. A well-known contemporary instance of this is Kissinger.²

FRG government and party officials were, when interviewed, generally reluctant to discuss German–German relations in the context of FRG–USSR relations (see pp. 63, 94–5) and although Günter Gaus and Klaus Bölling, the FRG’s Permanent Representatives in East Berlin during the 1974–82 period, have both published books on their terms of office (see bibliography), that of Günter Gaus is not, as he himself states, the sort of memoir in which he exhaustively traces such aspects as the development of negotiations.³ More frequent use of the single source, Klaus Bölling, has been made therefore in chapter 4 than would normally have been the case and a certain reliance has had to be put on his statements. However, the author took the precaution of sending a draft of chapter 4 to the FRG Foreign Office, inviting comments, thus balancing out any potential over-reliance on Klaus Bölling.

The survey of FRG–USSR relations in this study is a broad range one, focussing in detail on four main subject areas: ethnic Germans; Berlin; the Federal Republic of Germany’s relations with the German Democratic Republic; INF, Afghanistan and the post-Afghanistan period. The study examines each of the four topics in the context of FRG–USSR relations and the major issues which occurred. A short treatment only of FRG–USSR economic relations is presented in two appendices (A and B) summarising the main points which the author wishes to make and giving essential background information as it pertains to this study, as there has already been a major study in bilateral economic relations.⁴ Appendix C consists of a number of extracts, made by the author, from the official FRG document *Aspekte der Friedenspolitik: Argumente zum Doppelbeschluss des Nordatlantischen Bündnisses*, which add up to an official, declaratory version of what FRG foreign policy was in the early 1980s.

Chapter 1 is aimed at putting the study into context. It provides a summarised account of events after the Second World War as they related to FRG–USSR political relations – the division of Germany; the descent of the Iron Curtain; the Cold War; the new Ostpolitik; the beginnings of disillusionment with Ostpolitik and détente; the changeover from Brandt to Schmidt.

Family reunification and emigration rights for ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union is an issue to which the FRG attaches great importance and one which is given high priority. Indeed, the situation of the ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union,

and their wish to emigrate has been one of the major planks of the FRG governments' Ostpolitik right from the sixties to today, regardless of who was in power. This issue has been brought up time and again in the CSCE process and at all CSCE follow-up meetings. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the background to the problem, including a brief history of the ethnic Germans, their situation as of 1982 in the Soviet Union and their demands for emigration. It deals with the bilateral issue of emigration and examines the reasons for the decline in emigration in the five years from its high-point in 1976/7.

Despite the fact that the international situation of Berlin was one of comparative calm after 1972 – the Quadripartite Agreement having regulated the most troublesome questions and having brought great practical improvements to the city – Berlin was a major stumbling block in FRG–Soviet relations until 1978 and the summit meeting between Brezhnev and Chancellor Schmidt. The chapter on Berlin, therefore, examines the reasons why the city remained a serious bilateral problem through an introduction to the background and provisions of the Quadripartite Agreement, the differing Soviet, Allied and FRG positions on Berlin, and the early history of its implementation. It analyses the conflict after 1973 and Schmidt's 'breakthrough' in 1978 and its consequences.

Given the divided state of the nation, FRG–GDR relations were of prime importance to the FRG. Chapter 4 firstly examines three areas: the triangle FRG–USSR–GDR; the FRG's policy towards the GDR; the question as to whether German–German relations were demoted during the Schmidt period (a view that was held both in Bonn and in certain circles of the GDR). The second part of the chapter traces FRG–GDR relations from 1974 to 1982 in the context of the Soviet dimension.

Chapter 5 deals with FRG–USSR relations during the very difficult, 'crisis' period of East–West relations. It examines the FRG's position after the Soviet forces' entry into Afghanistan; the validity of the widely held view that Chancellor Schmidt performed a mediator/interpreter role between East and West; the FRG and the NATO double-track decision; and FRG–USSR relations in the immediate and post-Afghanistan period. Not much space is given to the Polish crisis as FRG–USSR relations were relatively unaffected by it and it did not achieve the significance that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan did. The sharp deterioration in East–West relations occurred in 1979/80, after the NATO double-track decision and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The chapter therefore concentrates on the FRG's

position and the state of FRG–Soviet relations after Afghanistan and the very important visit which Chancellor Schmidt made to Moscow in June 1980 when he was able to obtain Soviet agreement to go to the negotiating table, thus getting the superpower dialogue going again.

In her assessment of FRG–USSR political relations the author examines the view that has been held both in the FRG and abroad that during the Schmidt period Ostpolitik was demoted, that Ostpolitik and FRG–Soviet relations began to stagnate and that the great ‘visionary’ period of Brandt was over. It assesses the concrete achievements and disappointments in FRG–USSR relations during the 1974–82 period; the extent to which the FRG was able to influence the Soviet Union; and the extent to which the FRG modified its foreign policy out of consideration for (or as a result of Soviet pressure arising from) her bilateral relations with the Soviet Union. The chapter is concluded with a summary of the Federal Republic of Germany’s political relations with the USSR, 1974–82.

Chapter 7 is also aimed at putting the study into modern context. It provides a summary analysis of FRG–USSR political relations after 1982 and the events leading up to the historic reunification of Germany. The date of reunification, 3 October 1990, has been chosen as the natural cut-off point for this study. Although many aspects will remain constant, FRG–USSR political relations are obviously entering a new era and one in which the third element, the GDR, no longer exists.